

Valuing All Partners: College Faculty, Office of Service learning, Students and K-12 Teachers

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May 25-27, 2005

DESCRIPTION OF SESSION

Service learning is a mutually beneficial component of an effective teacher education program. Engaging students and valuing partners means addressing needs, providing resources and support, and understanding interrelationships among all partners. This session explores the benefits of service learning in an early pre-service teacher education program and engages the audience in role-playing and addresses a full scale, full service, service learning component in a community college teacher education program. The audience will view multiple benefits of service learning for future teachers through the perspectives of stakeholders who comprise the multiple “publics” of public education. Participants will receive copies of support documents such as assignments, student models, and support material.

PHILOSOPHICAL and MOTIVATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

Definitions, rationale and foundations of effective service learning are well documented. Citations from Chandler-Gilbert Community College’s service learning website include:

- The National and Community Service Act of 1990 defines service learning with a set of four criteria:
 1. Under which students learn and develop through participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community;

2. That is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity;
 3. That provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; and
 4. That enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.
- "Classic' service learning places its major emphasis on student and faculty reflection on the service experience. It is designed to improve teaching and to advance civic consciousness and moral character among students." (Ira Harkavy, Center for Community Partnerships, University of Pennsylvania.)
 - "...service learning works because it is based on one simple principle: you don't learn the basics by memorizing the basics, but by doing projects in which you utilize the basics.'...More than any other educational institution, the community college's very mission is enmeshed with a commitment to improve the communities that surround its campuses....The real value, though, lies in enhanced learning." (Judith S. Berson, "A Marriage Made in Heaven." *Community College Journal*.)
 - "Service learning bridges the traditional gap between academic and the "real world." Service makes academic study immediate and relevant." (Caroline Nolan, *Yale Daily News*.)
 - "Our institutions of higher learning might certainly take heed—not only encourage students to do such service, but help them stop and mull over what they have heard

and seen by means of books to be read and discussions to be had. This is the very purpose, after all, of colleges and universities—to help one generation after another grow intellectually and morally through study and the self-scrutiny such study can sometimes prompt." (Robert Coles, "Community Service Work," *Liberal Education*.)

- "Students need the chance to directly connect books and experience, ideas and introspection, to continuing activity in the community." (Robert Coles, Professor of Psychiatry and Medical Humanities, Harvard University.)

(as cited at(http://www.cgc.maricopa.edu/service_learning/))

The role of active involvement in K-12 classrooms for early pre-service education majors has also gained much recognition of late. Service learning is recognized as an effective pedagogy for connecting the foundation and theory of the college classroom to the practice in the K-12 classroom. At least three reasons can be used to support the role of service learning in teacher training: "First, service learning is consistent with the current renewed emphasis on the fundamental role of public schools in a democracy. Second, service learning is a useful strategy for combating perceived shortcomings in teacher preparation programs. Third, service learning enhances pre-service teachers' learning by linking academic content with community involvement." (Potthoff, 2000).

College and university Teacher Education Programs are focused on the importance of multiple opportunities (in addition to traditional, merely single student teacher experience) to interact in the classroom for a number of reasons from career choice and decision-making to motivation and inspiration. CGCC's teacher education faculty adopted and adapted the pedagogy of service learning as both enhancement to and extension of the course content. Providing both a general focus on education and attention to the specific topics of a selected

course (child development, education principles, exceptional learners, cultural diversity, classroom management, literature and math in the elementary classrooms) has added depth and breadth to the curriculum, and helped community college faculty begin addressing “teacher dispositions” with students early in their teacher training programs. Students find multiple benefits as a result of their service, including self-awareness and a feeling of empowerment. (Chen, 2004). Semester after semester, education students at Chandler-Gilbert Community College cite their semesterly service learning projects as their favorite and most meaningful learning event. Among comments on end-of-semester evaluations are these:

- “After three semesters of service learning, I am reassured about my career choice—I want to be teacher and I know I can be a good one.”
- “I was able to utilize strategies and information I learned in class in real world practice.”
- “[Service learning] helped me right off decide that teaching was the career for me.”
- “What powerful learning! The combination of my college course work, mentor-teacher, and interaction with kids helped me learn at a deeper level.”
- “This experience boosted my confidence and allowed me to set goals for my own continued successes in future service learning placements.”
- “It was a great extension to the learning in our course.”
- “This experience was a self-esteem wake-up call. I learned in class, applied it in the classroom, and feel motivated to be the best teacher I can be.”
- “Service learning makes the issues I learned in class (standards, high stakes testing, teacher stress, etc.) come to life.”

- “Service learning helped me see that I am not set out to be a teacher. But that I have a huge appreciation for what they do.”
- “Not only did I learn about books for children, but I witnessed how they fit into the curriculum and was able to gain experience with read-alouds.”

GOALS OF THE SESSION

- To introduce the role of service learning in a teacher education program, for early pre-service teachers, including developing attitudes and behaviors of ethics, civic engagement, and field experience.
- To engage participants in role playing exercises that generate benefits of service learning in teacher preparation from various stake-holders’ points of view, including: college faculty, college students (as future teachers), K-12 school personnel, and the profession of education at large.
- To illustrate components of a comprehensive approach to integrating service learning into program curriculum, including presentation of: cross-curricular assignments, activities, and assessments.
- To provide a model for logistical processes including: recruitment of school partners, orientating mentor-teachers, establishing placement procedures, and faculty development.
- To allow open discussion of best practices, support, resources, and interrelationships among partners.
- To share student models of assignments and assessments.

CURRENT STATUS

In collaboration with seven local school districts and six charter schools in the community, CGCC’s Teacher Education Program places 350-400 freshman and sophomore level service

learning students in K-12 schools each semester. With each education course they take, our students have the opportunity to apply course content and theories in a hands-on way by actively serving 15-30 hours in a designated K-12 classroom under the mentorship of a certified classroom teacher. At the onset of the semester, students taking education courses attend a mass-orientation to service learning where, after policies and procedures are discussed, they are able to select a specific school district for placement. Student placements, communication with school district personnel, recruitment of participating schools and mentor-teachers, and supervision of all logistical aspects of service learning as it pertains to teacher education is handled by CGCC's Faculty Liaison for Service learning in Teacher Education. A student from each education course is also hired to serve as the "service learning assistant", providing a link between the students, faculty, and Faculty Liaison. In this leadership role, the service learning assistants guide faculty and students through placement and paperwork procedures as well as track and enter all course information into a database. Residential and adjunct faculty commitment to curricular connections and reflection provide an instructional focus that positively impacts the experience itself and maximizes the learning from service. Finally, students continually rise to the occasion, making positive impressions of themselves as future teachers while being energized by interaction and involvement ("hands-on") learning in college, and reaching for deeper learning as a result of connecting theory to practice. Often, our students emerge more knowledgeable, more dedicated, and more energized in regards to their career choice in education.

References

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